

IN THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claims 1-19, without prejudice.

Applicant hereby elects for further prosecution in this case claims 20-24, as follows:

1 20. An apparatus for etching a tapered trench in a layer of material, said layer of
2 material having a mask adjacent a surface thereof having an opening defining a location on the
3 layer of material at which the trench is to be formed, said apparatus comprising:
4 an etching tool for performing vertical etch process steps on said layer of
5 material; and
6 an opening enlarging tool for performing steps of enlarging said opening in said
7 mask, said etching tool and said opening enlarging tool operating in an alternating manner to
8 form a trench of a desired depth in said layer of material.

1 21. The apparatus according to Claim 20, wherein said mask comprises a resist layer,
2 and wherein said mask opening enlarging tool comprises a tool for performing resist etch process
3 steps on said resist layer.

1 22. The apparatus according to Claim 21, wherein said resist layer is tapered around
2 the periphery of said opening to facilitate performing of the resist etch process steps.

1 23. The apparatus according to Claim 21, wherein said vertical etch process tool and
2 said resist etch process tool are incorporated in a tool that operates in a pulsed manner.

1

24. The apparatus according to Claim 21, wherein said vertical etch process tool and said resist etch process tool are incorporated in a tool that operates in a multi step manner.

Amended